



TITLE:

行為遂行的発言の特殊性(欧文抄録)

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CITATION:

安本, 英奈. 行為遂行的発言の特殊性. 哲学論叢 2001, 28: 47-57

ISSUE DATE:

2001-09-01

URL:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2433/24308>

RIGHT:

Performatives as a Special Type of Utterance

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This essay deals with the special characteristics of performative utterances. I tried to get a clearer view of performatives by taking special interest in Searle's analysis of performatives. There are mainly two ways of grasping this type of utterance, one is, to see this utterance as nothing special from other forms of utterance and cannot be differentiated from statements. The other view clearly distinguishes performatives from statements. To show an example of the former view, I explained the main ideas of Bach and Harnish, and for the latter idea, I took Searle's theory in focus.

According to Searle, Bach and Harnish do not see the extraordinary aspect of performatives that goes beyond semantic fact, therefore they gain the wrong idea that performatives could be indirect speech acts. Searle gives us a complete list of features that must be fulfilled in giving an account of performatives, and succeeds in revealing the properties of performatives that are not merely semantic. His theory is not a mere simplification of reality but a subtle and elaborate analysis of performatives.